

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended): A recombinant microorganism comprising a heterologous polynucleotide that encodes a heterologous protein or polypeptide, and from which
~~prepared by transferring, to a mutant strain of microorganism from which any of~~
~~*Bacillus subtilis* genes~~ one or more of the following genes have been deleted or
knocked-out *comA, yopO, treR, yvbA, cspB, yvaN, yttP, yurK, yozA, licR, sigL, mntR, glcT, yvdE, ykvE, ~~str~~, rocR, ccpA, yaaT, yyaA, yycH, yacP, hprK, rsiX, yhdK, and ylbO,* ~~or one or more genes functionally equivalent to any of these genes have been deleted or knocked out, a gene encoding a heterologous protein or polypeptide.~~

2. (Currently Amended): The recombinant microorganism ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 1, wherein the microorganism is *Bacillus subtilis* ~~or another bacterium belonging to the genus~~ *Bacillus*.

3. (Currently Amended): The recombinant microorganism of claim 1 ~~as claimed in claim 1 or 2,~~ wherein one or more regions selected from among a transcription initiation regulatory region, a translation initiation regulatory region, and a secretion signal region is ligated to an upstream region of a gene encoding a heterologous protein or polypeptide.

4. (Currently Amended): The recombinant microorganism ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 3, wherein the one or more regions are three regions constituted by a transcription initiation regulatory region, a translation initiation regulatory region, and a secretion signal region.

5. (Currently Amended): The recombinant microorganism of claim 3 ~~as claimed in claim 3 or 4~~, wherein the secretion signal region is derived from a cellulase gene of a bacterium belonging to the genus *Bacillus* and the transcription initiation regulatory region and the translation initiation regulatory region are each derived from a 0.6 to 1 kb region upstream of the cellulase gene.

6. (Currently Amended): The recombinant microorganism ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 4, wherein the three regions constituted by the transcription initiation regulatory region, the translation initiation regulatory region, and the secretion signal region are a nucleotide sequence of base numbers 1 to 659 of a cellulase gene of SEQ ID NO: 1; a nucleotide sequence of base numbers 1 to 696 of a cellulase gene of SEQ ID NO: 3; a DNA fragment having a nucleotide sequence having 70% homology with either of these nucleotide sequences; or a DNA fragment having a nucleotide sequence lacking a portion of any one of these nucleotide sequences.

7. (Currently Amended): A method for producing a protein or polypeptide comprising:
growing or culturing the recombinant microorganism of claim 1 for a time and under conditions suitable for expression of said heterologous protein or polypeptide, and
recovering said heterologous protein or polypeptide
~~by use of a recombinant microorganism as defined in any one of claims 1 through 6.~~

8. (New): A recombinant microorganism that is *Bacillus* comprising a heterologous polynucleotide that encodes a heterologous protein or polypeptide,

wherein said microorganism has one or more of the following *Bacillus* genes deleted or knocked-out *comA*, *yopO*, *treR*, *yvbA*, *cspB*, *yvaN*, *yttP*, *yurK*, *yoza*, *licR*, *sigL*, *mntR*, *glcT*, *yvdE*, *ykvE*, *rocR*, *ccpA*, *yaaT*, *yyaA*, *yycH*, *yacP*, *hprK*, *rsiX*, *yhdK*, and *ylbO*.

9 (New): The microorganism of claim 8 which is *Bacillus subtilis* having one or more *Bacillus subtilis* genes selected from the group consisting of *comA*, *yopO*, *treR*, *yvbA*, *cspB*, *yvaN*, *yttP*, *yurK*, *yoza*, *licR*, *sigL*, *mntR*, *glcT*, *yvdE*, *ykvE*, *rocR*, *ccpA*, *yaaT*, *yyaA*, *yycH*, *yacP*, *hprK*, *rsiX*, *yhdK*, and *ylbO* deleted or knocked-out.

10. (New): The recombinant microorganism of claim 9 from which *rocR* has been deleted or its expression knocked out.

11. (New): The recombinant microorganism of claim 9 from which *sigL* has been deleted or its expression knocked out.

12. (New): A method for producing a protein or polypeptide comprising:
growing or culturing the recombinant microorganism of claim 8 for a time and under conditions suitable for expression of said heterologous protein or polypeptide, and recovering said heterologous protein or polypeptide.

13. (New): A method for producing a protein or polypeptide comprising:
growing or culturing the recombinant microorganism of claim 9 for a time and under conditions suitable for expression of said heterologous protein or polypeptide, and recovering said heterologous protein or polypeptide.

14. (New): A method for producing a protein or polypeptide comprising:
growing or culturing the recombinant microorganism of claim 10 for a time and under conditions suitable for expression of said heterologous protein or polypeptide, and recovering said heterologous protein or polypeptide.

15. (New): A method for producing a protein or polypeptide comprising:
growing or culturing the recombinant microorganism of claim 11 for a time and under conditions suitable for expression of said heterologous protein or polypeptide, and recovering said heterologous protein or polypeptide.